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(12) In response to request by representatives of Liaison Association of Prefectural Governors for a review of the SOFA, US ambassador says: "No problem with our measures dealing with the environment"

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 5) (Full)
August 11, 2007

Tokyo

Kanagawa Gov. Shigefumi Matsuzawa and Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, chair and vice chair respectively of the Liaison Association of Prefectural Governors, called on United States Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer at the US Embassy in Tokyo's Minato Ward on the afternoon on Aug. 10. They asked for a review of the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), particularly these three points: (1) observation of domestic laws, including environmental laws and ordinances, and thorough implementation of environmental measures; (2) through implementation of safety measures to prevent incidents and accidents; and (3) establishment of a system to respect the wishes of local communities. According to Matsuzawa, Ambassador Schieffer avoided direct mention of a review of SOFA, only saying, "We have put into practice our environmental policy, fully conscious of the environment, so no problems exist." Schieffer thus indicated that there was no problem about the US Forces Japan's (USFJ) environmental measures.

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In the meeting, Matsuzawa suggested: "If it is difficult to review (the SOFA) immediately, how about forming a special agreement focusing on the environment issue?" Schieffer refrained from directly answering him, saying only this: "I can't say anything at present because I have yet to fully examine the details of SOFA."

Gov. Nakaima said: "(The public) is becoming increasingly conscious of the environment. A number of problems have occurred. We hope to see (the US side) firmly deal with them."

After making the request to the US side, Gov. Matsuzawa told reporters: "We've made a request every year, but the governments of Japan and the US have paid no attention to us. I think one idea (to deal with this situation) is to sign a special agreement focusing on the environment problem, aside from SOFA. I want to further study this idea along with the Okinawan governor."

(13) Ambassador, Aso discuss an extension of Antiterrorism Law

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
August 11, 2007

Foreign Minister Aso met with United States Ambassador to Japan Schieffer yesterday to discuss an extension of the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. Aso said: "This will be the most controversial issue in the next Diet session. The government will make utmost efforts to extend the law." Schieffer stated: "Japan's (Self-Defense Force's) continued refueling operations in the Indian Ocean (by extending the Antiterrorism Law) is important. The US would like to provide necessary information on the war so that persons concerned can understand the importance of the extension of the law."

(14) Antiterrorism committee members to visit SDF units engaged in operations in Middle East

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
August 11, 2007

Members of the House of Representatives' Antiterrorism Special Committee, chaired by Yasukazu Hamada, from both the ruling and opposition parties will visit Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates on

Aug. 21-24. They aim to visit the unit of the Maritime Self-Defense Force engaged in refueling naval ships from the United States, Britain, and other countries based on the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, which expires Nov. 1, and the unit of the Air Self-Defense Force that has continued airlift assistance in Iraq.

(15) DPJ discusses an extension of Antiterrorism Law

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
August 11, 2007

In a meeting yesterday of its foreign and defense sections, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) started discussing an extension of the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, which is to expire on Nov. 1. Officials from the Defense Ministry and the Foreign Ministry explained the current state of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operations based on the said law. But many DPJ members voiced dissatisfaction calling the ministries to disclose more detailed information. House of Councillors member Hideo Watanabe said: "The explanations by the government offices leave a lot to be desired. We cannot approve the extension of the law, if nothing is

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done." Policy Research Council Vice Chairman Akihisa Nagashima argued: "The government should disclose more detailed information, such as how much oil has been supplied."

(16) Foreign minister's itinerary for round of visits to Middle East, Latin America announced

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
August 11, 2007

The Foreign Ministry announced yesterday that Foreign Minister Aso will visit Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian territory, Mexico, and Brazil. He will leave Japan tomorrow and return to Japan on Aug. 24. He was also scheduled to visit France, but he will be returning home one day earlier by cancelling the trip to France, eyeing the planned reorganization of the lineup of the cabinet and Liberal Democratic Party executive members slated for the 27th.

(17) Maher questions police investigation into helo crash

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 1) (Abridged)
August 10, 2007

On Aug. 13 three years ago, a US military helicopter based at the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station crashed on the campus of Okinawa International University. Ahead of the accident's third anniversary, US Consul General Okinawa Kevin Maher responded yesterday to a Ryukyu Shimpo interview. The US military has not disclosed the names of four maintenance service crewmembers who were in charge of the crashed helicopter. Okinawa prefectural police have therefore sent papers to prosecutors on the four with their names unknown. "They should know the United States has jurisdiction in the case of an accident that took place on duty (under the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement or SOFA for short)," Maher said in the interview. The consul general added: "We investigated this case, and now we know what caused the accident. Even so, they (local police) ask the names of maintenance service crewmembers. I wonder what they want to investigate. It's more important to make efforts to prevent accidents." With this, he underscored efforts for training to cope with aircraft accidents.

In the wake of the helicopter crash, the Japanese and US governments have been holding discussions to review the current perimeter traffic pattern of Futenma-based choppers. In this regard, Maher said the Futenma base has now introduced some systems to improve safety. "But," he added, "there will be no big change (in the current flight routes of Futenma-based aircraft)."

Meanwhile, the Defense Facilities Administration Agency's Naha bureau presented Okinawa Prefecture on Aug. 7 with a procedural plan to conduct an environmental impact assessment for the planned relocation of Futenma airfield's functions to a coastal area of Camp Schwab in the prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago. "It's also

my understanding that they have now entered into formal procedures for an assessment," Maher said.

The Okinawa prefectural government has been calling for the Japanese government to lay down a Futenma alternative at a site in waters off the coast of Nago City's Henoko district. In addition, the Okinawa prefectural government has been demanding that Futenma airfield be effectively closed within three years. As it stands, Okinawa has yet to accept the environmental assessment plan. "We don't want the

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current state to continue," Maher said. He then noted that the Japanese government conducted a preliminary survey in waters off the coast of Henoko so that the relocation plan will not fall behind schedule. "If the work is likely to be delayed, the realignment plan will be affected in its entirety," he said. With this, he issued a warning to Okinawa Prefecture against its stance.

(18) The US' trump card in nuclear negotiations: Taking North Korea off the list of state sponsors of terrorism

YOMIURI (Page 7) (Full)
August 11, 2007

At a lecture on August 9 by former Special Envoy to North Korea Charles "Jack" Pritchard, it became clear that the US, in order to encourage North Korea to denuclearize, is attempting to use the removal of North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism as a trump card in negotiations, without any consideration given to Japan's abduction issue. While the "next step" of the six-party talks, the shutdown of DPRK nuclear facilities, has been agreed on, the details must now be fleshed out. At this stage, the reappearance of the different stances of the US and Japan towards the abduction issue seem unavoidable.

In the summer of 2003, the US added the Japanese abduction issue as a reason for North Korea's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. According to the Pritchard, with the "special relationship" between then Prime Minister Koizumi and President Bush in the background, Japan was able to persuade and "successfully win a concession" from the US. Pritchard said that the Clinton administration had rejected Japan's request.

Pritchard, who served as special envoy until August 2003 and participated in US-DPRK negotiations, emphasized: "North Korea fully understands why it was designated as a state sponsor of terrorism, how those reasons have changed, and how to get the designation lifted." Towards the end of the Clinton administration, the US and North Korea were moving forward with talks about removing the designation.

After North Korea conducted a nuclear test in October 2006, US-DPRK talks became an important concern for the Bush administration, and the lifting of North Korea's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism once again became a trump card for the US government.

For the US, the Japanese abduction issue is ultimately a Japan-DPRK bilateral issue and therefore, a secondary issue. For North Korea, getting its name off the list of state sponsors of terrorism would open up access to international financial institutions, such as banks, and allow it to acquire loans.

Thus, if the US removes North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, North Korea will get substantial rewards for its denuclearization.

According to Pritchard, the US, in response to Japan's discontent over the start of the process to remove the DPRK from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, stressed that the joint statement issued during six-party talks in February says: "One working group's progress must not affect the progress of another working group." Furthermore, Pritchard said that the US asserted that even if the working group dealing with the normalization of relations between

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Japan and North Korea stalls over the abduction issue, the US and North Korea can still work towards normalizing relations.

The biggest reason that the US still officially says that "it will take a long time before (North Korea) is removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism" is because President Bush has a friendly personal relationship with former premier Koizumi and the current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. As the foundation beneath the Abe administration wavers, it appears that in the future, we will be entering a phase where agreement between Japan and the US is even more difficult to achieve.

Pritchard is currently the president of the Korea Economic Institute (KEI). He occasionally visits North Korea with US nuclear specialists and officials involved with talks. When he visited North Korea in October 2006, he met with Li Gun, deputy director general of the American Affairs Bureau of the Foreign Ministry, among others.

(19) Collective self-defense: Government gives up on plan to reinterpret the Constitution at fall Diet session

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
August 11, 2007

The government decided on Aug. 10 to give up on a plan to reinterpret the Constitution during the extraordinary Diet session that starts in September. The purpose of the constitutional-reinterpretation exercise is to allow Japan to exercise at least part of the right of self-collective defense. The government for the time will not start drafting legislation related to constitutional reinterpretation. Due to the present political situation of the opposition camp having traded places with the ruling bloc in the House of Councillors through the recent election, the government has determined that it would be difficult now to continue with the constitutional-reinterpretation effort.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has expressed his enthusiasm about changing the interpretation of the Constitution since last September when he assumed office. He established in April a blue-ribbon panel, chaired by Shunji Yanai, charged with discussing the legal foundation for national security. The group has discussed four scenarios, including whether a Self-Defense Force vessel can strike back when a warship from the US alongside it is attacked on the high seas.

In a meeting on the evening of Aug. 10, the panel discussed whether the right of the use of weapons by SDF personnel dispatched overseas to assist UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) and other missions should be expanded so that they would be able to guard other countries units. Abe stressed: "Japan neither can win other countries' confidence nor carry out effective operations unless it closely cooperates with other countries' personnel." The panel reached an agreement with an eye on reviewing the possibility of constitutional reinterpretation.

Based on such a discussion, the panel plans to submit to the government in the fall a final report calling for allowing the SDF to exercise the right of collective defense. In consideration of the New Komeito, which has now been more cautious about constitutional reinterpretation since the Upper House election, the government intends not to change the interpretation immediately. With the

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ruling and opposition camps in the Upper House having traded places, revising the SDF Law and the PKO Cooperation Law has now become difficult.

(20) Expert panel on collective self-defense proposes adopting international standards on use of force while carrying out PKO

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
August 11, 2007

The government's "Council for discussing ways to rebuild the legal

framework for national security" held its fourth meeting at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) yesterday. The experts panel, chaired by former Ambassador to the US Junji Yanai, is tasked with studying specific cases concerning the use of the right to collective self-defense. The focus of discussion in the meeting was on the pros and cons of whether the Self-Defense Force (SDF) can counterattack when other countries' troops are attacked while on UN peacekeeping operations with Japan. Many participants suggested that the government should allow SDF troops to go to the aid of their allies by changing the standards on the use of armed force to conform them to those of the United Nations for its peacekeeping operations (PKO).

Under the current UN PKO Cooperation Law and the Iraq Humanitarian Reconstruction Support Special Measures Law, SDF personnel are banned from using weapons in any other cases than self-defense and emergency evacuation. The government's interpretation does not allow SDF troops to go to help other countries' troops, citing the reason that such operations might come under the category of the use of force overseas, which is prohibited under the Constitution.

In the meeting, the members shared the view that the government should approve of SDF's allies-rescue activities, regarding them as part of collective security aimed to restore peace by UN members in cooperation, instead of viewing them as an issue linked to collective self-defense. A number of members stressed the need for Japan to ease its weapon-use standards. One member said: "It is a lack of common sense for troops to do nothing when other countries' troops are attacked while on the same mission with Japan;" and another member remarked: "It should be a basic stance to act in accordance with international rules."

The panel intends to recommend in its report due out in November that the government should change its interpretation of the Constitution, which forbids the nation from exercising the right to collective self-defense. It remains uncertain, though, whether Prime Minister Abe, whose political standing is weak due to his party's crushing defeat in the July Upper House election, will be able to translate such recommendations into action.

The prime minister told reporters at the Kantei last night: "I understand that I will face more difficulties in promoting my policies, but I decided to stay in power all the more because I need to push ahead with the policies."

(21) Koike vs. Moriya on replacing the vice defense minister

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
August 11, 2007

A war of nerves that extends to the government and Liberal

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Democratic Party (LDP) has developed between Defense Minister Yuriko Koike and Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya over Koike's decision to have Moriya retire in September. Having been in his post over four years, Moriya, who had been saying, "I will decide when I should retire," feels that his reputation has been besmirched, and he is moving now to block the appointment of a former senior police official picked by Koike as his successor.

On the morning of Aug. 7, Moriya, who first heard of the way he would be treated from a newspaper report, stormed into Koike's office to protest: "There are supposed to be consultations first about personnel changes. But this was not the case at all." But Koike coolly replied, "It is as the newspaper stated."

Since the passage of the bill to extend the Anti-terrorism Special Measures Law will be the hottest item of the Diet agenda during the extraordinary session this fall, Moriya has been telling everyone, "I will be busy in the fall." He has extensive channels of communication to both the ruling and opposition camps, and in the view of one government source, "He is more like a politician type than a bureaucrat." He has absolute confidence in being able to operate in political circles. When Koizumi was prime minister, Moriya was even able to dig into territory of Koizumi's private

secretary, Kaoru Iijima, and last year in June, when Koizumi visited

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the US, Moriya accompanied him, which is unusual for an administrative defense minister.

Moriya, since his appointment in Aug. 2003, has a record accomplishments that have led to strengthening the ministry's authority, such as the dispatch of SDF troops to Iraq, the realignment of US forces in Japan, and the elevation of the Defense Agency to a ministry. A senior ministry official confided, "If it were not for the presence of Mr. Moriya, we would still have a third-rate agency."

However, it has been pointed out that he built a long-term administration by demoting those who did not agree with his views. As a result, he created a situation in which, according to a former Defense Agency chief, "there is no talented official suitable to be vice minister down to the level of Kohei Masuda, who is four years junior to Moriya (who entered the agency in 1971)."

Defense officials could always tell by looking at the color of Moriya's face whether another disgraceful matter, such as the leaking of classified information, had occurred. Regarding Moriya himself, gossip would not go away that he has connections with defense contractors. There were growing calls in the ministry for him to retire soon.

Moriya probably has no intentions of clinging on to his position, but the name mentioned for his successor is Chief of the Secretariat Tetsuya Nishikawa, who hails from the National Police Agency (entered that agency in 1972). For Moriya, who had expected someone hailing from the Defense Ministry, that person will be hard to accept. He is developing a strategy to roll back the appointment. Already criticism toward Koike has broken out in the government and ruling camp for her having departed to the United States without having fully set the groundwork ahead of time.

The one who was kept completely out of the loop in this whole personnel affair was Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki, who could not hide his displeasure about it when he told an aide, "The

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final decision will be made by a meeting of the cabinet secretariat." Former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki stated on Aug.

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9: "The leak about the change in vice minister came before the trip to the US, but it could not have been done without the approval of the prime minister."

Koike will begin to coordinate after she returns from the US on Aug. 11, but this uproar has suddenly changed the mood of welcome inside the ministry toward the first female defense minister. One senior ministry official spit out these words: "Koike aimed at completely cleaning out Moriya's imprint with a coup d'etat triggered by Nishikawa. I absolutely don't want Nishikawa to become vice minister."

(22) Jiji poll: 27% want to see grand coalition between LDP and DPJ; 12% want LDP-New Komeito coalition to continue

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
August 13, 2007

According to an opinion poll conducted by Jiji Press Aug. 3 - 5, the largest number, or 27% , cited a coalition between the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) as a desirable framework for administration. The result apparently reflects the concern about the political situation destabilizing due to the twist caused by the trading of places between the ruling LDP and the DPJ in the Upper House following the recent election.

Those who replied that it is desirable for the LDP and the New Komeito to continue the present coalition government reached stood

at 11.9% . If this number is combined with 10.8% , who replied that a single-party administration by the LDP is desirable, 22.7% of respondents hoped for an LDP-led administration.

In the meantime, 22.8% replied that an administration led by the DPJ is desirable. The breakdown comes down to a DPJ-led single-party administration desired by 11.0% , a non-LDP coalition government excluding the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) favored by 6.6% , and an administration including the JCP, supported by 5.2% .

To the question of whom they would like to be LDP president, 17.1% , or the largest number, cited former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, followed by Foreign Minister Taro Aso at 14.9% and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda at 8.3% . The number of respondents who cited incumbent Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was fourth at 7.4% .

The survey targeted 2,000 men and women based on individual interviews. The rate of valid replies came to 67.3% .

SCHIEFFER